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SISTER EDITH'S  
PROBATION



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1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for transparency and accountability, particularly in financial matters. The text notes that without reliable records, it is difficult to track progress, identify trends, and make informed decisions.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. It mentions the use of surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gather qualitative information, as well as statistical software and data visualization techniques for quantitative analysis. The importance of ensuring the reliability and validity of the data is stressed throughout this section.

3. The third part of the document provides a detailed overview of the findings from the study. It presents a series of tables and graphs that illustrate the key results, including trends over time and comparisons between different groups. The text explains the significance of these findings and how they relate to the research objectives.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings and offers recommendations for future research and practice. It suggests that the results of the study can be used to inform policy decisions and to develop more effective interventions. The text also identifies areas where further research is needed to address the limitations of the current study.

5. The final part of the document is a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the report. It reiterates the importance of the research and the value of the findings. The text expresses hope that the study will contribute to a better understanding of the issues at hand and that the recommendations will be implemented to bring about positive change.

**SISTER EDITH'S PROBATION**  
**AND OTHER STORIES.**

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*Frontispiece.*

SISTER EDITH'S PROBATION.

# SISTER EDITH'S PROBATION

## AND OTHER STORIES.



By E. CONDER GRAY,

AUTHOR OF "WISE WORDS AND LOVING DEEDS: A BOOK OF BIOGRAPHIES FOR GIRLS."



LONDON:  
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**"THE NOBLE CHARACTER MUST SUFFER MORE THAN THE  
IGNOBLE CAN SUFFER ; BUT HE HAS THE SECRET  
OF CONTENT WITHIN."—*Old Author.***



## SISTER EDITH'S PROBATION.

**E**DITH HARROWBY was left an orphan when she was between eight and nine years old. Her father had been an officer in the army—a hard, practical man, so much inclined to be a rigid disciplinarian, that he scarcely relaxed his stern rules even when he returned from his regiment to his own house. The friends of his wife—a meek, sweet-tempered woman—wondered how she could ever have listened to his love-making, and still more how she had managed to submit patiently to his harsh ways and gruff words. The two had not seemed at all suited to each other, and yet

each had felt a secret sense of satisfaction in the other's love, which did not waste itself in any unmeaning show of tenderness.

Colonel Harrowby was a younger son of a good family, and had but little fortune of his own ; and if he expected money when he married Catherine Graves, the daughter of a City merchant, he had been doomed to disappointment, for the house of Marshman, Graves, and Co. was compelled to suspend payment in the crisis that came quickly on the heels of Catherine's marriage ; and though they afterwards duly discharged all claims upon them they somehow never wholly made up lost way. So if it may be said that Colonel Harrowby's life was a struggle to make ends meet, Catherine Harrowby's life was a double struggle—a succession of little sacrifices that would have been only wearying and miserable to one less good and patient

than she was. Her husband was strong in the dignity that sometimes comes to natures like his, from the consciousness of having continually to swallow unpleasant things, and the determination that no one ever should have ground for saying that he was weak or unmanly; but she, too, was strong in the strength of an abiding faith, that since her girlhood had gradually grown in her.

Their first child, a boy, had died when about a year old; and when Edith was born, Colonel Harrowby did not disguise some disappointment. He had an idea that girls were a sad trouble in their tender rearing, were difficult to drill into order, and very often, if they did grow up, scarcely rewarded the pains spent upon them. To the mother's regret, he took little or no notice of the child. But when Edith began to run about and chatter, and to give promise of surpassing beauty,



then he would contrive to steal her away out of the mother's sight into his own room, or into a corner of the garden, to pet and fondle her ; and, if the truth must be told, he felt a kind of jealousy of the child's undivided affection for her mother. Edith could never be brought to acknowledge with eagerness that she loved her papa as she did her mamma. Indeed, she shrank from him, and could not hide that she did so, and went with him more from obedience than from love, for she had been taught always to obey. She loved papa—to be sure she did—very much ; but then her mamma had always been with her, had always taught her her lessons and her prayers—and should she not love her mamma the best ? And she would look up into his stern face sideways, with a kind of fear, as she answered his questions, while he tried hard to look pleasant and playful. It

was often a source of concern to the mother that there was no little danger of the child being spoiled under this divided *régime*—spoiled with the disease of vanity and worldliness—and she therefore took more and more care to strengthen her own influence over her. It was not that she grudged a share of Edith's affections to her husband, but that she was concerned for the child's future; for she promised to be very fair.

But Colonel Harrowby's sudden death abroad when Edith was nearly seven years old, relieved her mother from this difficulty; and as now their means were slender, they removed to Bunborough, that they might be near an old maiden aunt of Mrs Harrowby's, who had always been very kind to them. This aunt had had a deal of money left to her by an old lady with whom she had resided and travelled for several years. There

was a fine school in the town, and there was a convent just at the back of Aunt Martha's house. Mrs Harrowby watched her child's progress with unwearying attention and interest, and took care to instil into her heart the early lessons of religion—the blessings of humility and of holy service ; for all her married life had been such. Edith had seen so little of other children, that she shrank from the exposure of the school, and very soon begged to be taken away from it, notwithstanding that she was quick at every kind of learning. Signs of consumption, to which she had always had a tendency, now began to show themselves all too strongly in her mother ; and they therefore, at their aunt's request, took up their abode under her roof, and Edith was allowed to remain with them at home, and learn what they could teach her. The disease made rapid pro-

gress ; and it was very surprising to see a child so young able to realise so fully what was coming upon her. She would not leave her mother's bedside ; and when, at last, the mother grew so weak as not to be able to speak to her, they only got her away now and then by sending her off with the servant to the doctor's for medicine.

Aunt Martha—into whose hands the child entirely fell on her mother's death—was a woman of deep religious feelings, sombre and grave in all her ways, yet truly benevolent, full of sympathy with all kinds of suffering, doing much good among the poor near where she lived, and ruling her household with a half-grim, yet not unkindly severity. Edith soon became a great favourite with Martha ; and when she grew a few years older, it was strange to see how completely she enjoyed the old woman's confidence, though somehow

Edith could never wholly give Aunt Martha her full confidence in return. Aunt Martha was a staunch friend of the Church of England; but she had lived much abroad, and often spoke about the good works the nuns engaged in, mourning over the want of such communities in the Church of England, bound together for the love of the Saviour to cherish and tend his poor.

Aunt Martha had another *protégé*—a nephew, the son of her younger scapegrace brother, whom she had educated, and managed, after much difficulty, to find a midshipman's berth for. Frederick Edgerley was the only boy for whom Edith Harrowby had ever felt the least liking. Not that she was free with him; but he had been very frank with her, and she had admired him, and felt proud of him as they went and came from church the first time he had been home, after

a long cruise; and, as he was often spoken about by her aunt, it need not be said that she often thought about him, and wearied for him to come again. Nor need it be matter of surprise if the girl yielded herself up to the atmosphere of semi-romance with which her aunt's conversation tended to surround her in her secluded life—all unconscious as that good lady was of any such result. But so it was. Though Edith never said to herself that she loved Fred, still she thought constantly of him, and was full of schemes as to what she should do when he came back; but he was off on a long cruise, and always when she got a little hopeless, her thoughts would revert to the convents, and to the works of charity resorted to by the pious women to fill lorn hearts, vacant of other human love. Then she would think of her mother, and—what she now began to under-

stand something of—her constant self-denial and thankless solicitude; and she would say to herself that perhaps a life out of the world was the best choice after all.

When Fred did return at length, his manner was cold and condescending to her, as she thought. He was no more the frank, friendly boy he had been to her; but looked proud and distant, as if he was afraid of any of the old familiar ways being renewed. And now Edith, awakened as though out of a troubled dream, half sweet, half painful, began to ask herself what it was her duty to do. She was poor and friendless; for her father's family, who had always looked on his marriage as an unequal one, had never taken any notice of her. She was almost a helpless dependent on her aunt's bounty, and sometimes she fretted a little at the thought of this. The only thing was that she fancied she was of

some use to her aunt, and that she liked her company. But she was thrown more and more in upon herself; for her aunt's conversation, with its few unvarying topics—her nephew, the sights of Bruges, and her few poor people—scarcely afforded the relief that was needful. As an escape from the sheer depression of her circumstances, she betook herself to the reading of such religious books as her aunt's library afforded. Among these there chanced to be an account, in French, of the doings of a poor peasant, who, having early felt the call to the religious life, had obeyed the advice of her confessor; and, instead of seeking, as she had herself desired, admission into one of the contemplative orders of the Romish Church, which are strictly enclosed, she joined the Third Order of the Dominicans, or Secular Tertiaries. Her life was spent in works of self-denial



among the poor ; and the sick ; and she became so eminent, that she finally founded a new order, in which the rule of the Third Order of Dominic was combined with some of the rules of the stricter orders.

Edith delighted in the book, carried it with her, and brooded over it constantly, fancying she saw in the pictures of the good nun's frames of mind faithful mirrors of her own spiritual experiences. She managed to convince herself at last that her true destination was the Church of Rome, and the Order of St Mary Virgin. But still she did not open her mind to her aunt. She would sometimes tremble all over when she saw any of the sisters from the nunnery, and look over to the convent, as it lay hidden in the deep green of the valley that sloped away from the town towards the low-lying hills, and wish that a message could only be wafted to her from it,

to enable her to act with decision. But still she did not tell her aunt of what was stirring in her mind; and at length the conflict between her sense of duty towards the old woman who had been so good to her, and the promptings of what she thought her whole spiritual nature towards the religious vocation, began to tell upon her health.

"You are not well, Edith; you look pale. Hadn't you better take a walk down the orchard, or do something in the garden? These geraniums in the porch want watering, don't they?"

"I do not care for walking, aunt; and though I look pale, I do not feel ill. But I will look to the geraniums."

"That is right, dear. You mustn't mind an old woman like me; but run about outside a great deal more than you do. The first time I went to Bruges, when I was about

your age, I couldn't rest inside the house a moment."

Then Edith would turn, with a sigh, to go and water the geraniums, and their red made her think of the Sacred Heart; for that was the name of the order to which she had in imagination finally attached herself.

At length she became so weak that her aunt thought something must be done for her. She seemed to have lost interest in everything save these French books, in which she read continually. It would be hard to send her away for a time; but that was the only practical step Aunt Martha could think of. She had still one friend in Bruges, with whom she was in friendly correspondence; only Madame Saulier was Roman Catholic. But then she was a woman of such high feeling that she could well be trusted with the charge of her niece. So Edith left her

aunt's for Bruges, and was warmly welcomed to the house of Madame Saulier.

Madame Saulier was a little white-haired woman, active in her movements, but with a soft, thoughtful look, and eyes of deep blue that seemed to invite confidence. Edith at once felt at her ease in Madame Saulier's presence, and wondered one afternoon when she found herself freely telling her all the story which she could not bring herself to tell her aunt.

"My child," said Madame Saulier, "conscience is above all ties of relationship; and it is a sin to stifle it when the Church makes her claims on the interior life clearly felt. I must write to your aunt at once: she is a good woman, and will feel with you. You see she didn't cast me off as a friend when I became Catholic; and you are much nearer to her, you know."

So Madame Saulier wrote the letter ; and though Aunt Martha was vexed and disappointed, still she said, Conscience was a thing between each human being and God. It was hard to part from one she had come to love so dearly, now that she was growing old and needing sympathy, and the cheer of companionship, but she would still love Edith, and not change any of her intentions towards her, whether she entered a Roman Catholic sisterhood or not. But might it not be well to delay taking the vows as long as possible? Edith had not seen much of life, she had perhaps been kept too secluded from the world at Bunborough (and as she wrote this Aunt Martha blamed herself for having spoken so often of the work of the nuns), and might yet feel moved to return home. That was all she would ask now, and would pray that the serious step her niece was about to take might

prove to be for her spiritual welfare. The letter, though kindly, had evidently been written in much sorrow.

So Edith was received into the Romish Church, and put under Madame Saulier's confessor. At first Père Goujèan, having heard all her story, much to her surprise, appeared to look coldly on her proposal to become a religieuse. After some weeks, he advised her to join one of the active orders—the Little Sisters of the Poor. This was not quite to her taste, but she submitted, and entered on her novitiate. She hoped to devote herself at once to gathering in and teaching the poor children who swarmed in the streets near the convent, and thus recover some interest in life ; but the orders of the Superior were that she should help the sisters who nursed in the hospital. Knowing what was meant by the vow of obedience,

she tried to go about her duty cheerfully, and she was never lax in observing the rule of penance; but, in the weak state of her nerves, her strangeness to everything around her, and the painful sights she was every day called on to witness, she soon felt very depressed; while the regimen of the order, so different from what she had been accustomed to in England, tended to reduce her strength very much. It seemed to her that she had come to dwell in a dim twilight, that pained the eyes and crushed out every remnant of natural elasticity. Life was a kind of dull mechanic exercise; and she often felt as though she went about her duties in a kind of trance. Oh, how different all this was from the glad delight of a free devotion of every faculty to God, as she had promised it would be in her case! It seemed to her now she was maiming her life, to bring to Him a crippled sacrifice

; the widow's and niece. Her under them; truly heir asy. as ital. ing the ling was un-ear

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passed on, when the Superior intimated to her that now she was to be attached to the outer school, under Sister Catherine. This was a great relief to her; but, notwithstanding her ill-looks, no one had a word of sympathy for her; nor was it so much as suggested that she should relax any of her work or observance. Sometimes when she crawled out of her hard bed to chapel in the first early glimmer of the summer dawn, as the convent clock was striking four, she thought of Bunborough and her aunt; and her heart sank within her, and she tried to pray, and moved along she knew not how. Then she had to take her turn in the nightly vigil; and that was the most trying of all.

But it was a relief to think of the school and the teaching. Her whole heart would find glad scope in that good work. The children should love her because of the depth

of her love for them ; and she would have the satisfaction of being instrumental in good ; this had always been her dream, her fervent desire, and now she should be active in season and out of season to realise it. This should be the one purpose of her life. And the White Veil was accordingly taken.

So Edith began her work at the school full of enthusiasm ; for, though she fancied she had lost all her strength, her soul was still strong, and revived at the touch of hope as the drooping flowers at an unexpected glimmer of autumn sunshine. But here, too, she soon found free action so fettered, that experience was only a series of restrictions and disappointments. Sister Catherine, who had begun the school, and who regarded it very much as her own property, seemed to look with jealousy on any success that promised to surpass her own achievements. She was well

up in years, of a very reserved, almost a morose character ; and knew well how to dissipate any lingering earthly dream the novices might still dimly cherish under their devotion and their daily work. She thought Edith needed to be humbled ; and she therefore set herself to the task of humbling her. No sooner did she see that Edith really had some gift for teaching, and was able to conduct the classes as well as she did herself, than she told her it would be better for her that she should devote herself to the slower or more refractory children, who could not be managed in the class, but must be taken in hand one by one. What vexed Edith most of all was the conviction that any person of ordinary knowledge and tact in teaching could have done all that was needed without help ; and yet she and Sister Elfrida—a mild, middle-aged woman—had to tramp backward and

forward in hard-faced Sister Catherine's train; whilst they might have done so much good among the poor in their own dwellings, had they only been permitted to go forth alone. Still, had there been any reason in Sister Catherine's order, Edith would have submitted peacefully and done her portion of the work with cheerfulness; but it required more discipline than she had yet undergone, and of a somewhat different kind, to enable one to accept unreasonable commands as though they were the most reasonable orders in the world, and calculated to be most beneficial to those on whom they seemed to bear hardly.

Poor Edith inwardly rebelled against this arbitrary exercise of power, and, though she tried to overcome it, remembering the virtue of obedience, she could not help the tears sometimes rising to her eyes; and she was

fain to believe that the children knew it all, and were more docile and teachable than they would otherwise have been.

But she felt more and more that the incessant worries and restrictions which were imposed upon her undid all the good effects which the work and the devotion produced ; and she was afraid that if she persevered she would lose any little spirituality she had. She therefore besought Madame Saulier to take her from the convent when her year of probation should be finished. When the Superior and Sister Catherine knew the resolution she had taken, they were even more harsh and arbitrary towards her than before ; and, after some weeks, doubtless spent in deliberation, they declared " she had no vocation."

So on the expiry of the year Edith again took up her abode with Madame

Saulier, for whom she still felt all her first respect.

"My child," said Madame, "your heart needs another discipline, and that, I believe, time alone can bring you ; but you will be a good Catholic, and may yet take the vows, and, keeping them till the end, be a mother of many spiritual children."

And Madame Saulier wrote to Aunt Martha, who was only too pleased to receive back her child with open arms. Bunborough never knew aught of Edith's probation, save in the wisdom and the skill with which she devoted herself to the teaching of the poor, and the tending of the sick. A few years after, when Aunt Martha died she left all her means to Edith, who was now wholly free to devote herself to the good works in which her heart delighted. But when the movement for the founding of English sisterhoods

began, to the surprise of many, she declined to join in it, urging that she believed freedom of action was a necessity for some souls ; and that, though she was devoted to the English Church, she believed she could do more for it, and for Christ's poor, by persevering in the walk she had marked out than if she were to submit herself to difficult rules, even in order to be made Mother Abbess. One of the most unexpected things in her experience was an offer of marriage from Frederick, who said he had always loved her so that he could not make bold to tell her his love before. Aunt Martha was then still living, and seemed to favour the idea of a union between her two *protégés* ; but Edith would not listen to any such scheme. She was wedded to her work. She founded schools for the children, and an hospital for the aged, being able thus to give places as nurses to the best of her pupils, who

had approved themselves in this kind of work; and Bunborough learned, at last, to call her Mother Edith, though she never took upon her any vows.



## ANNA SCHWEITZER'S FAITH.

### I.

**I**F the plains, with their minute and endless detail of leaf, and flower, and plant, are the small print of God's great book of Nature, then the mountains—the mighty groups of Alps, and Apennines, and Cordilleras—are its capital letters. Gorgeously ornamented and illuminated, too, they powerfully attract and fascinate, when else the book were, perhaps, but vacantly read. Clouds and mists, rains and snows, drawn to them more than to the plains, are what the sun, like a true artist, uses for his ornamentation and illumination; the wind holding and guiding the magic pencil by which the subtlest tints

and hues are painted in. For nothing is more wonderful than the ever-changing aspects of "the unchanging, the everlasting hills." Not a moment but a glory dies, and some new glory is born in its stead. Yesterday morning, looking up the valley, one could have almost believed oneself in a ship, anchored on a windless, mist-shrouded sea. Mont Blanc and his company were lost to view, veiled from base to peak in pearl-grey robes of penance or of worship; and only now and then, for a brief moment, when the mist parted in twain, as though cloven by some mighty unseen wedge, the twinkling peak of a lesser alp disclosed itself; but so briefly, that to the mariner it might almost have seemed but the glimmer of a star. The floor of green grassy plain, dotted with its "little white houses where the people live," somehow seemed as if during night it had

extended itself beyond its old line ; and a soft billowy movement, so soft as to be almost imperceptible, was observed on the limit of the dim narrowed horizon when one looked carefully for a little time, just as when the merest puff of wind from under a door lightly raises the portion of a dusty window curtain that rests on the carpet. So gradually as almost to deceive the eye, the mist began to curl and lift itself from the plain in irregular, gathered folds, precisely as though giant children had been trying in play to pull up gigantic gossamer sails. At length, however, it was as though a stronger and more earnest hand had been suddenly put-to. The bases of the hills, in belts of dark green and grey, dotted with red, and blue, and purple, where the sun rays fell on patches of pines and rugged rock, began to disclose themselves ; and as the intervening links of mist

that lay in radiant wisps like great glistening pearls loosely strung from point to point, vanished one by one, the several hills seemed as if edging nearer to each other, the valley slowly emerging, re-created out of vapour. And as the mist-cloud, sail-like, folded itself inward from below, it seemed suddenly to divide in various irregular horizontal lines on the heights, the same "lifting" process likewise becoming visible at each of these, till at last the august master of the valley, his mighty bulk built up, tier on tier, of "snowy battlement," threw his golden crown, glimmering, higher up into the heaven than his wont, and the chasms, down which the snow-streams thunder at this point and that, came clear into view, as well as the dark jagged points of rock, below which again the pine-trees showed a softer line.

And how different this from the scene we

witnessed in the evening, when the dark shadows crept down like great birds of prey, and when the thunder muttered response to the roar of the thousand torrents, and the lightning gave a lurid terrific glimmer as it shot across the untrodden paths of purple ice, illuminating them momentarily with a phosphorescent brightness! And how different that, again, from the aspect things now wear, as I write seated at the window of a chalet, hung like a bird's nest, neither quite on the lower level nor uncomfortably far above it! The valley lies, as if asleep, bathed in the solemn dewy sunlight of the Sunday morning. Already clouds and mists have almost vanished, like creatures of the night, before the radiant shafts of the sun, and through all the stillness earth and air seem filled with subdued and silent joy. The very alps appear to wait, and stoop, and listen in the

hush. I can hear the thin clear tinkle of the cow bells ; and imagination, ever busy, suggests English church bells, with knots of people stealing slowly over heath and field. And even in such near neighbourhood to the "Sovran Alp," I am moved to reflect and to question with myself how it is that wherever a Christian man may be, nature seems so often not only to sympathize with his Sunday mood, but to promote it, and to prosecute him with a sense of wrongness and disharmony if anything is indulged in directly out of keeping with its sacred associations. And the only reason I can think of is, that man himself is the Sunday of Nature. He inevitably carries back to her, even in his moments of deepest dependence upon her both for rest and refreshment, the echo of that first paradisaical purity and perfectness, towards which, at once in her sternest and her sweetest aspects,

she seems persistently to point him. It is only when man approaches her in this spirit that the secret purpose, in light of which all her seeming imperfections and failures take on new significance, will so reveal itself that he will be enabled to joy in the cross that seems laid upon her even as he joys in the cross that through Christ is laid upon him. "Creation groans and travails in pain," and so did he till the hour of his deliverance came, and the face of Jesus shone upon his, imparting freedom. Thus Nature to the Christian only ceases to be a house divided against itself—ceases to be a body of life, like the Roman prisoners tied to a body of death—precisely as she is seen to be the shadow and type of that spiritual world in virtue of his intimate communion with which he is enabled to transform all the lower creatures into stairs leading up to the divine.

And on the last and highest step of these stairs stands our Saviour radiant in the strength of his triumph over death—the death which through humanity robbed Nature of its perfectness and beauty, and which by the new life humanity has received of Christ will also at last be swallowed up in victory. The Gospel of Christ is a Gospel of Nature, too. It redeems man from subservience to Nature; but in redeeming him it redeems Nature with him, for he is the freeman and the superior of Nature.

And I believe this is the reason why heathen peoples have for most part turned away from the mountains in fear, and thought of them with such shrinking and dismay. Nature to them, was the handmaid of death and the mother of corruption. They therefore tried to enjoy her favours while they could, and to flee her awfulest and sublimest



scenes and revelations. In the light of our own Bible this is not inconsistent with the truth of things. For Nature is regarded as being so deeply in sympathy with man in the divisions and disorders of his spiritual being, that conscience easily finds in outward things symbols of its own dissatisfaction and despair. Nay, it so projects its own feeling outward as to possess Nature with a second and more terrible burden of evil than the first. So it is not an insignificant matter that the law which came by Moses, and which, as Paul tells the Romans, even by Nature condemns man in his grosser sins, should have come among the hills—amid fire, and mists, and thunderings. “For the law,” as one of my old preachers has beautifully put it, “the law is a thunder-clap that terrifies ; but the Gospel is like a warm sun that dissolves the ice.” The Gospel not only ministers an abundant

entrance into heaven at death ; it makes the Christian free of Nature even while here below. The sea in storm is a sweet, still, small voice to him, because the Master hushed it into calm and trod its moving floors ; the mountains in their wildest aspects are touched with the softness of holy beauty, because He often retired to a mountain to pray ; the rivers, toiling through terriblest chasms, are blessed, because He was baptized of John in Jordan ; and all nature by Him becomes repossessed of the spirit in which it was originally created by its Maker.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was interrupted at this point by one of my fellow-travellers, who summoned me to pay a promised visit to a very interesting woman, lying bedrid further up the valley. So we at once set out. Our path, after we

had struck up the mountain side a little distance off, lay in a kind of zig-zag. At one time we were embowered and overshadowed by the wavering strips of pine trees, that almost closed over us with that peculiar deep-blue light only found in alpine regions; then in a moment we emerged into an open space, sheer cliffs above us, passing sharply, as the eye followed them upwards, into the purple white of the eternal snow. Looking down, it was as though we almost overhung fields of maize, belts of luxuriant trees and cultivated green, realising more than I have seen anywhere else the idea which must have possessed the poet when he spoke of the "enamelled green." Suddenly we came upon a yet richer zone.

The aroma of sweet flowers mixed itself with the gracious odour of the pines that came stealing up with a full and gladdening

sense of perfectness in outward Nature. The eye, and the ear, and the organ of smell were at one in the perception of beauty, and, by some strange law of association, make one think of the early morning stars that rejoiced together.

My friend, to whom the place was not so strange or so new as to myself, was carefully "toiling up the pass," to all appearance absorbed in thought. I had often been so overpowered by what so suddenly broke upon my eye, that conversation was almost too great an effort for me; and, noticing this, he had fallen into the habit of passing on before, putting his hands behind him, under his coat-tails, and thinking as he went on with measured pace. But now, what with the grandeur that met the eye, and the suddenness of the revelation, I could keep silence no longer; so pushing on briskly a few paces, I took him by the arm, and said—

“Pray, let us sit down a moment, the grass here is so pleasant; the view is so wonderfully grand; and, if I mistake not, your thoughts are worth hearing.”

“Readily,” he replied, with a kind of start, as he made for a little bank, to which I pointed; “but as for the thoughts, I really know not if they are worth the while, being of the kind that do not pass smoothly through the narrow door of words.”

“That’s pretty well true of everything worth putting into words,” I said; “another good illustration of the common proverb that ‘speech is silver while silence is gold;’ only till the gold gets an individual stamp upon it, and is set in circulation, it has scarce served any purpose, not to speak of its highest purpose. This scene is certainly one well fitted to stir golden thoughts, though, in my own case, I confess it only stirs the fire of my

enthusiasm, and that, as you know, only gives smoke at the first."

"Well," he said, slowly, as he brought his pipe and tobacco-purse from his pocket, for truth compels the frank acknowledgment, with regret, that he is a confirmed smoker; "well, I was just thinking how surpassing wonderful it is that here, where God has sown his wonders with such profusion, the people for most part seem so dead to any sense of his presence. Of all places of the earth, I should have fancied that the grandeur, the ceaseless change and succession of indescribable appearances, together with the constant and awful sense of danger people must live in here, would have served as salt for the religious life."

"Familiarity may breed indifference here as in other things," I replied, "but I am afraid the eye truly to see God's wonders

never takes its first excitement and direction from Nature, but from something far higher than it."

"Ah, and that's where it is," he replied, turning with an earnest smile towards me. "Coleridge was right in the deepest Christian sense, though probably he did not quite mean it in that sense, when he said, 'Oh, lady, we receive but what we give.' If a man brings Christ in his heart, he will find Christ in Nature; if he brings him not thus, he will never find Nature anything but a mass of dead inert matter, or, at best, a harsh exacting mistress, whose finest movements are but fresh layings-on of the whip. Winds only buffet, suns only scourge, and snow and ice are only hindrances to the earth's yielding up fruit to him more spontaneously."

"Well, perhaps that is just the reason why the mountaineers so soon lose all sense of the

beauty and wonder of their surroundings; they look down oftener than they look up. All the bounties of the earth lie below them, and only waste places, beautiful wildernesses, for most part above them. These stand, cruel and remorseless, between them and the serene heaven, which is thus shut out from their souls as from their bodily sight.

"And if you are right, our mountaineers are no worse off than men are anywhere and everywhere," he said abstractedly as he shook the ashes from his pipe.

"I do not think they are," I replied. "Men everywhere are busy in creating nothing else but cold-peaked alps of sense and imagination and desire. 'Man's mind the mountain-maker is,' sang an old favourite poet of yours, as, like us, he contemplated the glories of these rugged terraces."

"Yes, and the old poet was right. I go



with him in questions of that kind," he answered after a short pause. "As you say, the true alps that shut out heaven from us are those of our own imaginings; and truly when one thinks what glorious Christian work has been done in the valleys, when Christ has once found a home in the heart, it would be wrong to blame the valleys. The mountains of worldly cares—the barn, the bank, the shop, the ship, the wharf, the railway, the exchange—these truly are as sky-piercing, heaven-hiding, and cloud-gathering as are those we now look on towering like giants up into the azure there."

"That thought has often crossed my mind since we came here; and yet I never could put it clear before my own mind, not to speak of making it clear to others," I explained as he resumed his pipe again. "And it strikes me somehow that we, amid the bustle of a

town, are in one respect worse off than these mountaineers, the simplicity of their life saving them from the temptation. In our case, the very truth of Christ itself lifts us up as it were above the heights of nature, but instead of helping the upward look, our elevation but encourages the downward one; and we justify an absorbing interest in the things of time on the ground of objects which have naught in common with these as we should regard them."

"Yes," my friend rejoined; "and that is, perhaps, the reason why, when once the people of the valleys have been truly awakened to the truth, they have held by it in such sincerity, and been so ready to sacrifice everything for its sake. But the sun is coursing up his skyey road, and we must proceed on our mountain-path;" and so saying, he rose and led the way.

We climbed a few steep paths, rounded the shoulder of a dark block of rock marked with chasms and fissures, down some of which water trickled sparklingly. Before us, set as on a green shelf sharply cut out of the mountain, stood a little cottage.

"That," said my friend, "is poor Anna Schweitzer's house. You will find that she is now a lamp lighted in the darkness; and being well known and respected, her light is not put under a bushel. She is the widow of a peasant, who became a guide to the glacier when the *furore* for the Alps broke out, and her only son was bred to his father's dangerous pursuit. Both perished unexpectedly when in the exercise of their calling. She herself has suffered much from a kind of painful swelling, commoner even to the inhabitants of some other of the Alpine valleys than here—and has in later years been



ANNA SCHWEITZER'S HOME.



stricken with rheumatism. Greatest trial of all, she has gone stone blind. But she is so patient and cheerful that it is a pleasure to see her and to converse with her."

By this time we had reached the door, which was open, and my friend, without ceremony, stepped in. Her daughter-in-law, we found, had gone out on some little errand. Anna was lying on a kind of box-bed in the far corner of the little room, so shaded that, coming in suddenly from the bright sunlight, I failed for a time to see her. But not so she; the inner sight seemed quickened by the loss of sense, and almost before I had crossed the doorway I heard a sweet voice quavering with weakness.

"Welcome, welcome, mine friend! I knew thy footstep coming up the path. When the eyes are shut I really think the soul both hears and sees. And well it may when

Christ is within us to supply the want of eyes. Think ye not so?"

My companion's hand was in her's, but before he could reply the voice went on—"And you've brought your friend to see me; how good of you, when the path's so steep! But, indeed, the love of Christ has wings, and true Christians *will* be together. So, so," as he raised the pillow for her head with one hand, she still keeping hold of the other—"there, there," she went on, stretching out the other arm—"put your friend's hand in mine a moment. Christians, I think, should pray with hand in hand; it so steadies them, and makes them like one, especially at a bedside."

So my friend and I dropped down on our knees at the low bedside as by one accord, and such a prayer as I never before heard came from the lips of that poor woman—

poor, but rich in the gift of grace. The prayer was short, idiomatic, the voice steady and low, as if the speaker felt a whisper was enough, for God was very near. Stopping rather abruptly, she pressed my hand, and said, "Now my dear new friend, prayer travels from mouth to mouth, when the two or three met together are in the one spirit."

I felt so embarrassed, in the midst of surprise and the excitement such circumstances could scarce fail to produce, that I could only repeat the Lord's Prayer. My companion followed, short, calm, and earnest. And till now I had not seen the face from which the sweet old voice had proceeded. I shall never forget the impression made on my mind when I opened my eyes. The face was soft and fair as that of a child's; the eyelids were tenderly drawn half over the dim eyes, fixed as if on some eternal reality, and every



feature was transfigured with content and spiritual joy. It had not been originally a beautiful face, for the cheek-bones showed high, and the chin was too broad ; but a holy old age had touched it with that sacred simplicity which sometimes makes old faces look like infants'. With such characters, their life is all of one piece, and so are their words. We stayed nearly an hour, my friend carrying on the conversation through the pauses of our old friend's faintness, from which she always emerged as with new strength and gladness.

Many visits I paid to Anna, both during that season and later, always gaining new light from her, and fresh strength to aid in the battle of life. When we became more intimate, she would often speak to me of her earlier days—while as yet she knew not the riches of God's grace—and she would some-

times wander into delightful reminiscences of her husband, to whom she always said that under God she owed all. And as the result of many scattered conversations, I am glad to be able to tell in another chapter how it was that Anna was first led to that knowledge which had so richly transfigured her character with faith, and love, and heavenly content; and it may be taken for a proof that true religion does not rob us of any of our joys, but so adds to them as to make us joy in pain, and sickness, and trial, and loss. Such lives are the best evidences for Christianity.

## II.

THE dwellers in alpine regions are sometimes for considerable periods entirely cut off from their neighbours. The snow may fall and render the roads, at no time easy of

- access, completely impassable. The avalanche may shoot downwards and overwhelm or bury many slim chalets in its progress. Even though the worst may be escaped, the inmates of a house may be for weeks as completely cut off from the outer world as though they lived in a desolate island in some far distant sea. This was now the case with the Schweitzers and their children. The snow had come down suddenly, and, but poorly prepared to stand a lengthened siege, they had to face the prospect of hunger and starvation. Many a time, when Berthold, in the spring, had set forth to take the cattle to the higher pastures, had Anna expressed her fears concerning his safety, and burdened him with instructions about his welfare. At these times he was always ready to assure her that there was less danger in going there than in staying at home in the winter, and, any way, he would

add, looking serious, "The good God is near us." And now, when the snow wrapped them in, so that their poor chalet could scarcely be seen over it, and there was no hope of communication for days, he could only repeat the same words, "The good God is near us, Anna, and we shall get safely through, if it be His will." But she would look, only the more downcast at his words, and say—

"I wish there had but been another sack of flour in the house, and that I had not given thy brother Friedrich the last of the potatoes from the pit. No doubt down below they suffer less than we do."

"How often have I told thee grumbling spoils good digestion," rejoined Berthold ; and then he could not help smiling as the thought suddenly came to him, that scarcity of food was a much more likely evil than failure of appetite ; but he quickly added,

"Thou art not wont to grudge a gift to those who are worse off than we are."

"I never heard any one talk like thee, Berthold ; thy easiness vexes me. It would not trouble thee though there was not a bite in the house ; but look you at this little row—it needs no skill in counting to see how we shall be put to it," and she broke into tears as she pointed to the line of little shoes ranged in the passage, as if for a reminder of the weight of the blow that had fallen on them.

"Well," urged Berthold, "we must do the best we can. The children are God's best gifts, and each must bring a blessing, though things look very dark just now. But when they are at the worst they mend, as the proverb says. Perhaps by to-morrow I may be able to creep down to the village, and get something, if so be God in His mercy has spared the place."

But to-morrow came, and the next day, and still Berthold was kept in durance. His only relief was in reading from an old book, which had been his father's; and now and then Anna, in the pauses of her spinning, as the younger children played around her unconcerned, would strain her ear to listen—for Berthold had never unlearned a bad habit of reading aloud, even when he had no wish that others should hear. And now Anna caught hold, at intervals, of something like this:—

“ If thou art sore laden with losses, look up; if thou art laden with successes, look down; for of the two burdens the last is the heaviest to carry, and no star is seen by the downward looker, unless the well is deep, and then it is but the shadow of a star. We must look up in joy for the reality; while we sorrow, even though we sorrow as those

having hope, it is still but the shadow that we see. You remember Paul, how in stripes, in shipwrecks, in bonds, he rejoiced. So it has been with thousands and thousands of the faithful followers of Christ in all times. . . . It is said, I fear with some truth, that those who dwell in lofty places, as we do among these Swiss hills, are so apt to look downward that they stoop in their gait before they reach mid-age. Here is a parable of life before our eyes every day. Let us not forget it. If a man is lifted up by wealth, by worldly station, he is but placed on a lonely hill-top, with a world beneath him ever in his gaze, and drawing it away from the sky. He becomes proud, self-confident, given to think only of his own things. Suffering and loss temper the mind, and, like well-polished glass to the eye, give it lengthened vision. The Bible, of all books, is true to the life. How

few of the wealthy, the comfortable, the high in station, came out from among their brethren at the call of our Lord, when He walked in the flesh through the cities of Judea! Nicodemus only came to him secretly. The young man who had great possessions went away sorrowful. Pilate saw no wrong in Him, but he could not withstand the clamour of the Jews. . . . But while we study to let God work out his own will with us, accepting all real trials as being meant for our improvement, let us be careful not to inflict trials on ourselves; *making* stripes to lash ourselves with. . . . Many are the people who from day to day go on, as though God were a niggard. They do not believe that He means to be a faithful Father. They treat Him as though He were a hard master, or as if He were like some one left in charge of a garden, that would grudge a passing



child the plucking of a flower in it. . . . I have even known good people who took the relish out of their daily food by grumbling at it; and were no better than the dog that loses his taste of one morsel by overhaste to make sure of the next. And these good folks called themselves Christians. I will not deny that they were; but if God loves a cheerful giver, then He must love a cheerful receiver too; and sure I am that *they* would be as niggard in their giving as in their receiving, even though they were rich. My friends, it is here that the poor can outstrip their superiors—they can more easily be great and generous in spirit, knowing that in the spirit the Lord will fulfil their desire. So it was with Hannah of old, so it was with Simeon, so it was and is now with all who look above little earthly cares and long for the coming of that glorious day, when the Spirit of the Lord shall cover

the earth. . . . If thou wouldst follow Christ, if thou wouldst fare forward with Him, mourn not that thou art but ill supplied with worldly things. Thy poverty makes thy access easy, thy sorrow is a ready preparation for His joy, thy emptiness for his fulness. 'Leave all thou hast, and give to the poor, and follow me.' For us, brethren, the hardest part of the task is done. We have so little to leave that we should be thankful. . . . And oh, the sweetness of that journey! Foot-sore, weary, hungry, sleepless, there is a constant repast of peace for the soul. Jesus is in the heart; He guides us safely by the green pastures and the still waters; He soothes us, lifts us up, washes our feet. All losses, griefs, hard work, hard fare, lack of friends, are made up to us richly when we have him by our side. 'Galilean, thou hast conquered,' said the pale pagan; and so may we say, but with joy. He

has conquered us to save us, to lead us to the land that is sweeter than this present, even to Beulah. . . . Let, then, our souls dwell in the valley, and rejoice in the richness of His blessing. Privation will not daunt us then, nor solitude oppress us. Though we starve, we are well fed ; though the fire burn us, we suffer not ; though the waters rise upon us, they carry us not away ; ' though we die, we live.' "

This book had become Berthold's close companion. It had a year ago made a changed man of him. But Anna could not understand the change—it was a mystery to her, that a man should be able to look so calmly at what often made her anxious and distressed her beyond words. And sometimes, she had been so impatient as to become reproachful ; and had thought to herself that Berthold was losing the manly spirit for

which he had been famous in his youth. His quiet answer had not always in her case "turned away anger;" for not seldom it would have relieved her in midst of her own irritation and concern, if he had but answered her more after the manner in which she was sometimes tempted to speak to him. It is indeed a strange thing in human nature, that gentleness does not always have its pacifying effect, but is only irritating. So Anna had often felt it, and blamed herself keenly for it afterwards. But now, whether it were that this new danger had stirred a hitherto unopened depth of her nature, or that there was something unusually touching in the tremulous voice with which Berthold read, some of these sentences came to her mind with a new meaning, and brought back to memory, strangely enough, the text of the last sermon she had heard at the village :

"He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me," and the idea of *taking up* the cross—*i.e.*, receiving gladly the cares and trials of life as appointed by God, accordingly as the preacher had explained it, fixed itself in her mind. "Perhaps," she thought, "that is what Berthold has done,—perhaps that is why he can be patient and cheerful, when I am only vexed and put out and miserable."

On this occasion relief came to them at length, and though all the family had suffered, no permanent evil results remained.

\* \* \* \* \*

But next year, as Berthold was conducting a party of travellers up the mountain, a slip took place, and he and another man were engulfed. Anna's sorrow was overwhelming. What could she do to bring up that young family? How would she manage through

the long winter? How could she ever pay for teaching them as they should be taught? The neighbours came to offer her their sympathy; but every word they uttered seemed only to add to the sore burden that lay on her heart: the good pastor came and spoke to her of the bliss of those who die at peace, as he knew Berthold had done. And the true pity conveyed in the words of the venerable grey-haired old man helped her for a moment. But when the children were put to bed, all the old misery came back, with the sense of her utter loneliness in the world. She was prostrated by her sorrow, nearly beside herself; but just when she was at the worst, sitting by the fire moaning in her chair, the words, "The good God is near us, Anna, He will carry us safely through if it be His will," sounded in her ear as if Berthold had spoken them. She actually

started and looked up to see if he were not beside her. There was no Berthold there ; but under a kind of indescribable attraction, she rose, and went to the little book-case, and taking down that old book, she opened it and read :—

“ O ye that mourn the loss of your best and dearest, despair not—they are safe with Him. As the shepherd foldeth the lambs, as the mother straineth the child to her breast, so rest they on the breast of Jesus. It is well with them ; and so if ye follow in their footsteps, it shall be well with you. God will provide.” That sufficed : it was like a nail driven home. That book did for the wife what it had already done for the husband. God-fearing, patient, and full of faith, Anna became ; and, as has been said, she not only contrived to bring up her children and to educate them, living to see two of her sons

worthy pastors of her loved Swiss Church, but she herself exercised such an influence for good in her native valley as few women have done.



## THE STRENGTH OF WEAK THINGS.

### I.

“**A**H, but when the balance comes to be struck, *they* have the advantage of us.”

So said William Wingrove as he sat one day on the sofa beside his wife—an interesting creature, slim, dark, and pale, with traces of fatigue and excitement still visible on her thin white face and dilated eyes. William did not look up as he spoke, but kept nervously working with his watch chain. He was a stalwart fellow, with a full voice that melted into a delicate low tone when he

was any way touched, as if he had some fear of hearing his own words, or did not like to trust his sentiments to their rough and uncertain keeping. And yet there was a mark upon him. Though he was frank enough, the neighbours had often blamed him for a peculiar reserve for which they could see no reason, and of which they often spoke to each other, with reflections and suggestions as to whether there might not be something more serious in his life than any of them knew. And many and fruitless were their guesses ; for, though Mrs Wingrove was affectionate and always ready to be helpful in a strait, or to do any kindness that was possible to her, there was something about her—a wistful air, a reminiscence of inward trial and distress spoke through her frank smiles and cheerful tones—which women the most rude and vulgar instinctively understand and respect,

and know better than to intrude upon it by futile questions. Wingrove, too, would speak civilly, even kindly, if he met any of them, and would gladly do them any little favour that lay in his power ; but when he could he avoided coming into direct contact with them, and tried to find society among his books, for he was a great reader. He was a clerk at a large manufactory not very far from where he lived ; and though he had married early, this seemed no drawback to the moderate success that he had learned to be content with. He had pleased his employers, and after between six and seven years' service felt that he enjoyed their confidence. Had he been in the habit of putting a more worldly point on things, he might have said that he had *made himself indispensable*.

But in spite of the remark we set down at the outset, he *was* an exceptional man, inas-

much as he very seldom did put a worldly point on things, or indeed spoke of his worldly concerns at all. Had his wife been less of a sensitive, patient, self-denying woman, she might well have complained on this score. But she was quite content ; and the money for the housekeeping was so regularly and carefully bestowed, that there was no need for her asking questions. In spite of all this William Wingrove had a secret trouble, which yet was no secret to her who was so well fitted to administer solace. It was not so much that their youngest child—a fair little girl-blossom on whom they had both doted with exceeding tenderness—had just been put in her little white coffin, though that loss had tried them sore, stirring up in the husband's heart, it must be confessed, some of the muddy dregs of doubt that had troubled the stream of his youthful life. All had been

done for the little two-year-old sufferer that human skill and human appliances could do, and nothing had been spared to purchase short respites of ease and comfort after all hope was over. With what greedy eyes, the absorbed, studious man would seek the little crib at the other side of the big bed, when he came home day after day at night for his meals! With a silent rising of the heart he used to take in his the little hand which once in its joyous fulness of life made him think of a fluttering bird, and was now so worn and shrivelled, and twitched so restlessly, that he could not help thinking of a bird's claw while he looked on it as the mist *would* gather in his eyes. And, when the last had come, and when the next-door neighbour, who felt a kind of subdued pride in being able to make some return in kind for neighbourly offices, had gone to her own house, William sat down

on the sofa in a kind of stupid maze, and then drawing his wife beside him, sat for a long while still, the silence being broken at last by the words—

“ Ay, when the balance is struck, they have the pull on us, *these silent ones.*”

Helen's heart was too full to reason then, or even to shape her ready sympathy into words. She rose and threw her arms round her husband's neck, the better to hide the tears that rose into her eyes, and the sight of which might have distressed him more. But she had often reasoned with him, too, on the way in which he had brooded on *the* one mistake he had made in his life—what in the eyes of many would have been a comparatively venial mistake; yet it was enough to turn for long a current of Marah bitterness into the stream of his life.

## II.

William Wingrove had not always been the man he was now. Before he married he was much given to society ; for he had a lively fancy and a nimble tongue. Besides, he wrote verses—beautiful, regretful, aspiring verses—in the Poet's Corner of the newspaper in his native town. It was almost as much on the strength of these, as of anything else, that the girl, who had gone to school with him ; had sat in church beside him ; had watched with equal eye the swallows twittering to their young under the old church eaves ; had rejoiced to run messages to the shop where he served his apprenticeship ; and had at last risen to the solemn dignity of walking out with him in recognised young

lady's apparel when he came on visits home, slipt, more by force of outside opinion than by any declared or sudden uprising of what is commonly called "love," into being spoken of as his sweetheart, and marriage between the two came to be regarded as natural, and the only proper close to such an intimacy. So Helen Lightfoot in her nineteenth year married William Wingrove, in spite of rumours that since he had left he had become rather fond of gay company and what that brings along with it. She was but a quiet unpretending girl compared with many of those he had seen in the town where he now resided, and he often spoke with such unmeasured enthusiasm of other women of his acquaintance, that a more jealous and less hopeful and loving heart would have felt a little thrown in the shade and neglected. But it was never Helen's way to assert her



rights ; and perhaps she had the more complete victory in the rights of the heart at last. Then, as before, she was to him just what she had been at first—" Little Nellie." She never dreamt that anything could alienate him from her. Had he not written these delightful verses, breathing of all devotion and truth and love of beautiful things ? Perhaps what was odd in his ways now was simply the right of men like him. So Helen judged and believed, for he was no common man to her.

There was one thing from which the two seemed to have drawn different influences, and that was the Sunday school they had attended. With Helen the school and her teacher were sacred things, and sore it not seldom was to hear her husband make disparaging remarks which yet she could not well take any notice of.

Just before his marriage William had written a long poem which, by a series of instalments, had seen the light in the columns of the newspaper in his native place. He had received so many congratulations upon this poem, that the fire of ambition, so easily awakened in young men, was now blown into full flame within him. He would be a poet—would write a great epic—and the world should hear his name and cherish it. Now, for the first time, he secretly rued his marriage, and felt that he might have done better. If he had but married one or other of the ladies he knew, he would have had leisure to realise his visions, and do justice to himself. Now, it was drudge, drudge, drudge, so that even poetry itself became a drudge—the top and cream of the day's fancies being skimmed clean off before night by dry and ruthless office quills.

And so when a little sickly child was born in due time, from him it got but cold welcome; for was he not immersed in higher matters? His poem was rapidly approaching completion, in spite of drawbacks such as an Atlas would have sunk under. In a divine heat of creative fervour, a fulness of inspiration that bore him upward as on the sweep and libration of mighty wings, he would write a hundred lines at one sitting, after coming home from a trying day's work. He wondered at himself. The wine of the poet's delight, as he described it to me afterwards in quiet pathetic tones, was pulsing with tingling fiery gladness through every vein; and his one desire was to shut out worldly cares and botherations from his mind. While he wrote his child was slowly wasting away—but poorly cheered in spite of the cooing tender voice of the mother, who never left it for a moment

save to give her husband tendance, and this in spite of a weakness that had never rightly left her since its birth. All day she was possessed by gravest fears ; but she had few experienced friends to whom she could speak ; and she could not intrude upon William's few quiet hours, snatched more from the night than from the day, in which he sought to draw his soul clear from its sheath to be a wonder like another "Excalibur."\* She waited on to save him annoyance ; but at length she felt something *must* be done. So she proposed that for the sake of seeing her mother and sister, who was weakly, she should go home for a time and take baby with her ; for she could not breathe the fear that lay nearest her heart, for his sake.

"Everything will be left in good order ;

\* "Excalibur" was the charmed sword King Arthur got from the mystic Lady of the Lake, and none could unsheathe it save himself.

and if Patty Wyness would give you hot water in the morning, and light your fire before you come home at night, you could get along for a day or two, dear ; couldn't you ? ”

“ Patty Wyness ! d'ye say her, Helen ? she is an empty talking fool.”

“ Well, but she has a good heart ; and I haven't got so many neighbours that I can afford to despise her just yet a wee, my dear.” The unusual firmness with which she said this attracted him ; and turning round, he said :

“ Well, anybody except her, if you please. But the notion of going home just now ! your sister's weakness—that isn't it, surely ! You've got home sick ! What would you have better than you've got here ? But that's always the way with you women. You can't abear anything but being coddled and jumped about with and made toys of. If you'd got one o' these idle sort o' chaps that are eternally

running about the lanes and crying over the want of work, with their children in their hands, that would have been vastly better for you, no doubt."

At these words Helen could not help the tears coming into her eyes, as she looked on him pitifully without speaking, which only drew down on her a fresh rebuke.

"Now, Nelly, look here. If that's your style of taking advice and discussing plans, don't come to me. It makes me lose the whole night and more. Do as you like, and don't bother me: I'm busy;" and with renewed resolution, he set to his writing. So there was nothing for it save to submit.

### III.

One of William's patrons was the pastor of an influential dissenting congregation, who

had written and published some clever lectures on the Spirit of the Age, and who was really more in earnest about the graces of art and utterance than about saving grace; though, to be simply just, the latter never failed to have due and proper place assigned to it in his pulpit teaching. He had that very day returned from London, and a note from him was now lying before William, conveying the grateful intelligence that, through his efforts, a door was being opened for the gratification of his young friend's legitimate ambition, though at present the light fell only through a narrow chink. When absent, he had seen a certain lady, whose influence was powerful among the refined and influential circles of the metropolis—among those who patronised and were glad to aid the poor but gifted sons of genius. This lady, who was vastly interested in what she had heard of

William and what she had seen of his verses, would give him an introduction to Lady Gardon, and Lady Gardon's smile would doubtless prove the "open Sesame" to throw wide the door and lift the humble poet into the serene independence that favours the higher production. Such a chance as this, which might never offer again, should not be lost sight of, and William knew the proverb, "Strike the iron when it's hot." If he would go up to London at once, there was no saying what might come of it.

This was on Friday, and on Saturday William arranged to leave home that afternoon, to return on the Tuesday morning. He carried a note to Mrs Curteis, who received him with a sort of stately distant kindness, which permitted her to yield him the tips of her fingers, as though her hand



was pretty equally divided on the doubtful point, one half proceeding under a faint protest, genteelly concealed. This was something different from the welcome he expected, the more that he had been kept long waiting. When Mrs Curteis came she was already prepared with a note for him to deliver to Lady Gardon ; and, after calling a servant to direct him by the nearest route to Amherst Gardens, tendered the tips of her fingers as before, never referring to his poems further than to say, " You write beautiful poems, Mr Wingrove ; I'm sure Lady Gardon must admire them ; I sent her the printed pages two days ago." Had William known the contents of the note he bore, it is more than probable his pride would have been strong enough to save him the journey. It ran :—

" DEAR LADY GARDON,—This young man

has been favourably spoken of to me by some country friends — but you know how apt country friends are to exaggerate the merits of their *protégés*—to take common geese for swans. I sent you some pages of his verses on Wednesday; and, if you care for them, and think he is likely to reward any attention of ours by *rising* and making a name, then, pray, be good enough to give him a line to Marks. He looks rather dull, I fancy; and you know better how to deal with him than I do. His friends spoke to me of introducing him to the Colstons; but this had better be dropped till we see, as time is always so precious to them.

“ I sent that poor misguided girl, Elizabeth Grove, who can't be got to give up her prodigal brother, to Mrs Pottinger, deeming it best to pass her on. For the same reason, please excuse my so soon sending another

petitioner to you, and do by him as best consists with your own feelings.

“Yours ever devotedly,

“Dear Lady Gardon,

“ALICE CURTEIS.”

Lady Gardon saw William Wingrove, and asked him to breakfast with her on the Monday. He went; but instead of having a chance of telling her his views, or asking her opinion of his poems, he had to sit and listen to the talk of some half-dozen gentlemen who, from their composure, self-satisfaction, and serene enjoyment of the exquisite viands handed about in dishes that glittered and glimmered amid crystal and fairy greenery, must have been of that lucky few who had “risen” and made a name, and were therefore looked on by Lady Gardon as being worthy in reflecting back on her some of their

later glory. All that William distinctly learned of these gentlemen was that Mr Colston was among them ; but this gentleman took no particular notice of the young man whose country friends, in their sympathy (?) had sought the great man's notice for him. When William left he was told the footman would give him a note. It was duly delivered to him on a silver salver as he passed through the hall ; and he went with it direct to Mr Jenkin Marks, whose whole talk' seemed directed to impress him with the majestic greatness of the house of Marks & Co., rather than to add the least iota to the poor fellow's ease, or to the importance either of him or his verses. As he was going out at the door another gentleman, with a glass in his eye and a cigar between his fingers, passed in ; and William was vastly struck by the difference in the tone which Mr Jenkin Marks used

in addressing him. William, though, of course, he knew nothing of the contents of Mrs Curtei's note, yet felt that this must be one of Lady Gardon's friends who had "risen."

In spite of all these heavy and disheartening circumstances, which made him glad to get home again, William at once set about finishing his poem. Notwithstanding an apparently ineradicable prejudice against poetry, more implied than expressed, which much puzzled and vexed our friend, Mr Jenkin Marks had promised to give the MS. most favourable consideration, and William was satisfied that this was all that was needed in his case. So he wrought more desperately than ever, and as a consequence was more self-absorbed, and indifferent to common things at home. At length, in a week's time, which seemed as long to Nellie as it seemed

short to William, the MS. was sent off, after having been twice packed up for book-post, and taken down again. But on the third evening from this, when William, in the half-oppressive lull that waits on the most absorbed men after a big bit of work has been got done and out of hand, went into the sitting-room, a touching sight enough met his eyes. His wife was bending over the five months' baby on a low sofa. The little thing's breathing was hard and struggling, the eyes were fixed, the hands fluttering. Death was near; and now, when nothing more could be done (for the doctor had said so), there came a revelation on William Wingrove, as with a great shock, which made him ever after a different man—a wiser and a sadder one. So far as I know, he never wrote more poetry, though he would read it sometimes to his children, and kept up his reading for their sake.

## VI.

William Wingrove had never till then sounded the quiet depths of his wife's heart. She bore her trial with such meekness ; no word of reproach was breathed ; and there was no decrease of respectful endearment. The days between the death of the child and the funeral seemed to lay a load on his shoulders ; but it as certainly seemed to lift a load off hers, notwithstanding that the day after "all was over" she had to retire to bed, for her physical powers had gone down in the reaction. But still she had words of comfort for her husband, who, as he sat disconsolate and silent at her bedside that night, by one of those strange coincidences that heap crushing materials on stricken hearts, received back into his own hand from Mr Jenkin Marks the MS. of his poem, which had been despatched

in such a white heat of hope. It was accompanied with a formal note declining to undertake its publication. The packet looked so bare and cold to him now, that he could not open it. He drew out a drawer carelessly, and was laying it in without lighting the candle, when, disturbing some papers, his fingers caught in something soft and clinging. He lifted it up between him and the flickering firelight. It was the chosen of baby's curls that gleamed in rings like gold. Oh, faithful, hopeful mother's heart! He broke down, and the tears flowed freely.

"Willie, my dear, come to me," said his wife, holding out her arms. And he went staggering to her bedside. "The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!" said she, as she drew his head close to hers.

"If I could but say that!" he exclaimed in



half-smothered accents. "I've no doubt about a devil, for he's here in my own heart, and I feel him tormenting me now for my indifference that he provoked me into, but I am not so sure about a God. I didn't mean to be cruel," he went on with the hasty inconsequence of overwrought feeling suddenly aroused, and he hid his face in his hands.

"Oh, Willie, to speak like that! God has been kind to us. Little Rosie knew me, and looked in my face so quiet just before she went."

"And that's poor comfort now, when——"

"Hush! you didn't know how it was, else ybu'd been as put about over it as I was. Sure enough you didn't mean it. Maybe it was best ye didn't know, for menfolk, I think, get it all on their hearts at a sight, and cannot do aught for themselves or for those in pain afterwards. We women feel different,

and get it all on our hearts only when everything has been done that can be done."

"Well, we mustn't speak more of it now. There, you lie quiet, and I'll go down-stairs and fetch your drink."

And William crept away, for he was overcome, and felt that if he gave way to the full passion of his grief he might do harm to his wife.

In youthful days William had had many sad and untoward thoughts about God's providence, which were now revived in him. He could see no thread of righteous government run through the tangle of the world's affairs; and, what was worse, he had no wish to speak of it. The scepticism of many men has some hope, simply because they seem to have no rest in it, and must speak about it to everybody. But William was no noisy doubter. Now began the reformation in habit and

moral life he was to undergo, which made him, instead of a brilliant, talking youth, an absorbed, serious, silent man, through so many years of his life.

Helen lay ill for weeks. The doctors (for a second had been called in to consult) began to shake their heads, and were inclined to say nothing respecting the patient, if not directly questioned. Even then they delivered themselves in cautious, qualified, though still half-hopeful, generalities, always ready with some suggestion as to something that *might* do her good. Helen herself began to lose hope in midst of her extreme weakness; and, far from exacting as she was usually, she craved that William might sit with her alone. He had often sat with her before, for he was deeply concerned for his wife, but some handy woman had always been with him. Now Helen declared she wanted no attendance

that he could not render her, and other service was disposed of. In spite of the trying crisis of a most weakening disease she was able to draw him close to her, and to say in feeble whispers—

“ ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.’ Oh, this sickness has given me such a glimpse of the better world, Willie, I could well go if it were His will, and if it were not for leaving you!”

She had the words “my child” on the tip of her tongue more than once, to say what a loadstone that was to her heart, drawing it to the other world, but she did not utter them, feeling that her husband did not share her faith in her visions of the infant’s bliss, and that it might only stir painful reflections in him.

But he could not speak just then, and manfully repressed his sobs, fearing it might do her injury. And now and again came her

weak voice, as she had strength to speak, between long pauses.

“Yes, how sweet it is to feel those who have gone are in God’s hand, and nothing can trouble them more;” with woman’s rare instinct putting it generally. “I scarcely know whether to wish to stay or to go; but God’s will be done.”

William, could he have ventured to speak, would have said that it was all very well to speak of the security and bliss of a God’s hand, were there only some more satisfying security that there was a God at all. But Helen, reading his face, guessed his thoughts, and signing to the New Testament that lay at the end of her pillow, whispered, “Read, read,” and fell back with her eyes closed in exhaustion.

He took the book, and read where it opened of itself, as softly as he could :

“ Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.

“ And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

“ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us ; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

“ My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue ; but in deed and in truth.

“ For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things ;”—and so on to the end of that tenderly fatherly chapter.

v.

To the great surprise of all who knew them, Nellie got a favourable turn and recovered

slowly. But it was long before she regained the full strength of former days. She observed a growing change in her husband, and it distressed her. A look of steady and fixed depression was settling down upon him, and with that she felt most unequal to do battle as yet. To appearance he had lost all interest in the literary work of spare hours; and no other interest having taken its place, there was one chamber in his heart that seemed to be vacant or full of dust and cobwebs, and it tended to make all the others dark and dusty too. But if God spared her to him, she felt certain she could beat off the enemy in time. It wanted but careful watching; and when the fruit was ripe, it would fall almost of its own accord. On the Sunday mornings she would sometimes bring his better clothes to him without a word; and without a word he would go with her to chapel, and listen with

close attention, but with no perceptible sign of the least impression having been produced. The chief difficulty was to get so much as a word from him with respect to his own state—he chose rather to wrap up all his spiritual feelings in a veil of dark indifference. Sometimes Helen would read a passage of Scripture or a chapter in a religious book; for ever since her illness her religious feelings had been greatly deepened and enlarged. But he seemed to try to escape from all direct conversation on such points.

So time went on, and in course of years other children were born to them—a boy and girl, both full of health and spirits. The father seemed to enjoy their playful fun, and would sometimes make shift to take long walks with them. But when the infant Sunday-school was spoken of for the boy, he shook his head, and said, with a smile that



was more despondent than a frown would have been, that there was plenty time to think of that yet awhile. Another child had been born—a sickly one—and the mother's powers and skill were heavily taxed in her nursing. One trying child's disease came after another, and seemed to suck away so much of the little creature's life, till at last she seemed wasted to a shadow of a child. The mother's heart was bound up in the puny thing; and the father seemed as if now determined to atone for the past, if atonement on earth were possible. But all was of no avail: the child lingered on till she was nearly two years old, and then slept away in her mother's arm, and new golden rings were put in the neglected drawer beside the poem and the other golden rings of seven years ago, as bright and jewel-like as ever.

And to the father it seemed that the new

time brought back the old time; and he spoke in his wife's ear—

“ Ah, when the balance comes to be struck, *they* have the advantage of us.”

“ But they do not need to push their advantage, even though they have it,” said she : “ their bliss is too complete for that. Folk don't force their mind back upon the troubles of the night when the morning is come ; and why should they? It is eternal morning with them now. They are safe with God and happy in his rest.”

“ Oh, if I could but feel and believe as you do, Nellie ! but I can't—that's the curse of it. So it's no use talking.”

“ Oh, yes, you can believe if you earnestly desire to : only think of Jesus—what He did, how He suffered and died a death of shame ; and then think of yourself, and what you deserved. If we had nothing to hope in but

ourselves, then you would be right. If God had done nothing to save us, and Christ had never been revealed to our mind and conscience, full of grace and truth, then the natural heart would bear the truest witness. But what can you make of the great crowds who ever since Christ died have found his salvation, not only sufficient for their perishing souls, but have been led to glory in it? I fear none of us would care to live were there not something in us far deeper than the doubt that kept its own place against all arguments, and cast light along the hard road in spite of us. Oh, how well I remember old Daniel Scott's earnest parody of his great countryman—'The very light of honest doubt is light from heaven.'"

Just then a little lad of four—black-eyed and smiling—peeped in, and edging along to a stool by the fireside, sat down ; and, moved

by the stillness and the quiet, looked up sideways, like a bird, in curious inquiry. Then all at once he began to sing one of the snatches which his little ear had been able to catch from much patient conscientious teaching given by the best of all human teachers—a good mother :—

“ Jesus loves me, this I know,  
For the Bible tells me so,  
Yes, Jesus loves me,” &c.

And scarcely had he finished when another little face peeped in, fair and blue-eyed, with anxious expression, and little mouth pursed up with prepared important questioning. Both the children had been kept as much as possible ignorant of what had taken place, that they might the more easily be disposed of at the time of the funeral. But little Bessie had got a glimpse through the open

door where the body lay in its coffin, and came to unbosom herself. She nestled up to her mother, and then turning up the little anxious face to hers, said slowly—"Ma, has dear Jesus put little Nellie into that pretty silver box, to keep her in it always and always, with the angels up high?" The mother could only breathe a low "Yes, yes, dear," as she patted her pet, and the father melted into tears—water flowing from the rock. "Is that it, pa?" urged the child again, turning towards him with a wistful look, and laying her hand on his, as if to compel the most satisfactory though reluctant testimony: "Is that it? tell me, please, pa." And what could the father do but say, "Yes, yes, dear," and drew her to him and kiss her?

Thus are the weak things raised up to

confound the strong ; for this was the end of William Wingrove's doubt, which, like a disease, had gathered strength from habit, and become almost inveterate. He never became other than a silent reserved man : but a smile gathered on his face, and he did many a kindness to poor needy people. He could even take out the poem he had thrown aside for fear of it drawing his heart away from what was more human, but he always put it back into the drawer beside the precious relics of the lost ones ; because he felt that poetry, like some hydraulic machines which only raise water to let it fall again, only raised him up to let him fall ; but that the memory of his children, now with Christ, let him fall down only at the last to raise him up into the truth and bliss that flow from fellowship with the Saviour. Often, often would he repeat the verse—"Out of the mouth of

babes and sucklings hast thou ordained praise." This is still his favourite text, which he delights to quote most of all; for he is now a well-known and powerful local preacher among the Methodists.















